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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 24 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Today regrettably marks the thirty-eighth day of the Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike in peaceful, non-violent and collective protest of their inhumane treatment in Israeli captivity. This hunger strike was undertaken by more than 1,500 prisoners to also draw urgent attention to the critical plight of the over 6,500 Palestinian prisoners and detainees being held by Israel, the occupying Power, and to appeal for respect of their fundamental human rights.

Unfortunately, this appeal has been met with further punitive measures by Israel, the occupying Power, against the prisoners, who are enduring harsh conditions and declining health. This has included solitary confinement, threats of force-feeding and relentless incitement against prisoners and their families, dismissing their legitimate grievances and rights. Moreover, despite the deteriorating health of many of the prisoners, the occupying Power continues its intransigent refusal to address their minimal calls for respect of basic rights and for more humane treatment, provoking greater tensions and worries among the prisoners' families and the Palestinian people as a whole. At the same time, the occupying Power has not relented in its arrest campaign, persisting with its daily raids and arrest of Palestinian civilians throughout Occupied Palestine.

In this regard, we draw your urgent attention to the fact that more than 60 of the hunger strikers have been moved by the occupation authorities to hospitals as a result of their deteriorating medical condition, while 592 other hunger strikers have been moved for observation to infirmaries set up in the prisons. Among the dangerous consequences they are suffering are repeated loss of consciousness, nausea, vomiting, severe head and limb pains, low blood pressure, low heart rates and weight loss of at least 15 kg. In addition to this, the occupying Power is cruelly withholding information regarding the health of prisoners on hunger strike from their families, legal representatives and relevant human rights organizations.

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The deteriorating situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees and Israel's negative reaction to their basic demands has heightened the solidarity of the entire Palestinian population in support of the prisoners. Across Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, countless peaceful protests and demonstrations have taken place. Unfortunately, as is the usual practice, Israeli occupying forces have responded with brute force and excessive violence against the civilian protesters. This week, occupying soldiers shot and injured at least 11 other Palestinians taking part in protests in support of the hunger-striking prisoners as part of a general strike undertaken across Occupied Palestine.

At the same time, Israeli settlers, illegally transferred to our land, have exploited the rising tensions and instability and intensified their violent actions against the Palestinian civilian population. On 18 May 2017, during a demonstration in a village near Nablus in the occupied West Bank, a terrorist settler, who was driving on a road where demonstrations were taking place, got out of his car and shot at Palestinian protestors. He shot a Palestinian, Muataz Hussein Hilal Bani Shamsa (age 23), in the head, killing him and injuring an Associated Press photographer who was also in the area. Following the killing of this young Palestinian man, another Israeli settler distributed candy to passing Israeli vehicles in provocative and cruel celebration of this terrorist crime. On that same day, in Ramallah, where protests were also being held, Israeli occupying forces fired on civilian demonstrators, wounding one Palestinian. This was preceded a day earlier by an Israeli settler firing his gun at protesters near Ramallah, injuring a 19-year-old Palestinian.

As the situation continues to deteriorate and destabilize, we call once again for attention to this crisis and for international intervention to demand and compel Israel's respect of its obligations as an occupying Power under international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including as regards the Palestinian prisoners and detainees in its captivity, including those on hunger strike. We underscore in specific Israel's obligations in this regard under article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We thus call once more for an end to the abuse of Palestinian prisoners and for their humane treatment in captivity, in conformity with international law, while reiterating our calls for their release.

The international community cannot wait any longer to take action in order to avert the further decline of the situation, including to avert the loss of life of any of the hunger-striking prisoners, as well as to stem the rising tensions and anger of the Palestinian street. This requires a humane response to the prisoners' pleas and plight and serious efforts to de-escalate tensions. Failure to do so will further exacerbate the situation on the ground, with negative implications for the prospects for peace and potentially far-reaching consequences.

Before concluding, we wish to bring to your attention the situation in the Gaza Strip, where the entire population remains under Israel's inhumane and illegal blockade and upon which the occupying Power continues to commit aggressions and brutality. In separate incidents, on 22 May, Israeli occupying forces opened fire on Palestinian farmers and fishermen. Reports indicated that occupying forces stationed at a military post northeast of Khan Younis in southern Gaza opened fire on Palestinian farmers tending to their land near the Israeli-imposed border fence and that occupying forces opened fire on Palestinian farmland east of Al-Maghazi refugee camp in central Gaza. These incidents come on the heels of the Israeli shooting and killing an unarmed, young Palestinian fisherman, Muhammad Majid Bakr (age 23), off the coast of Gaza at a distance of just 3 metres just last week. As reported by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights: "None of the fishermen posed any threat to the live of Israeli soldiers. This also emphasizes continuation of

Israel's policy to target the fishermen and their safety and deny them from freely sailing and fishing within the allowed fishing area."

As tensions continue to rise across Occupied Palestine under this suffocating, illegal Israeli occupation, we again appeal for the international community's urgent attention and action in line with international law and the clear commitments and responsibilities in this regard. Demands must be made for Israel, the occupying Power, to respect its legal obligations and comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The occupying Power must not be appeased as it persists with its violations, obstruction of peace, and denial and obstruction of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination. Rather, it must be made to understand that one day it will be held accountable for all of its human rights violations against the Palestinian people and for its unlawful occupation and colonization of their land. It is high time to end the culture of impunity that has allowed Israel to commit such grave crimes against a defenceless, occupied people for far too long without consequence. As we rapidly approach the date of the fiftieth year of the Israeli occupation, this task has become more urgent than ever. We urge the international community, including the Security Council, to rise to its responsibilities.

This letter is in follow-up to our 612 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 12 May 2017 (A/ES-10/753-S/2017/423), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.